

## Romans 11

### 11:1

Paul makes an assumption from the previous chapter that his readers may have made and then says it is not true.

OT examples of God rejecting his people:

1. Judges 6:13,  
Gideon says, "But now the Lord has abandoned us and put us into the hand of Midian."  
(True, if connected to Judges 2:1-5)
2. 2 Kings 23:27 – 3.  
Psalm 44:9, 23 –
4. Psalm 60:1, 10 –
5. Psalm 74:1 – 6.  
Psalm 78:60, 67 –
7. Psalm 108:11 – 8.  
Jeremiah 7:29 – 9.  
Jeremiah 31:37 – 10.  
Lamentations 2:7 – 11.  
Lamentations 5:22 –
12. Ezekiel 5:11 – 13.  
Ezekiel 11:16 –
14. Hosea 9:17 –

Paul is going to make a point in the next verses about a remnant that appears to come from 2 Kings 21:14.

The OT also makes a point of the fact that God has not and will not reject Israel,

1. 1 Samuel 12:22 –
2. Psalm 94:14 – "For the Lord will not reject his people; he will never forsake his inheritance."
3. Psalm 95:3 –
4. Lamentations 3:31 -

Paul uses himself as an example of a Jew who God has not given up on and as proof of God's plan to continue to use Israel. Paul, the Jew, is an apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul reference to himself includes:

1. An Israelite – the chosen people
2. "Seed" ("*spermatos*",  $\sigma \pi \epsilon \rho \mu \alpha \tau \omicron \sigma$ ) of Abraham
3. "Tribe" of Benjamin which would include Paul in the faithful tribe that stayed with Judah in the southern kingdom and is a contrast to the northern 10 tribes who quickly went astray.

So, Paul may be setting himself up to appear in a similar position as Elijah who is mentioned in the next verse. Paul would then be saying, "I am an Israelite who has remained faithful. If anyone is going to say Israel has

been rejected by God it would be me (Paul) since I am the only one left!" But, of course, Paul knows he will be rebuked by OT verses, God's words to Elijah and the actual reality of what is happening in the history of salvation. So Paul presses on for the answer.

### **11:2**

God can not reject his own plan.

This refers to the people of Israel as a nation and their purpose.

Amos 3:2 "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins."

"his people" is used in 11:2 just as it was used in 11:1. In 11:1 "his people" clearly refers to the nation of Israel. So, in 11:2 "his people" should also be understood as the nation of Israel as the people God foreknew. The phrase does not refer to some of the Israelites who God foreknew. God foreknew the nation, and many in that nation perished.

"whom he foreknew" refers to the fact that God knew the character of his "chosen" people before he chose them. Which means God foreknew their future unfaithfulness. Their choosing was based on grace, not Israel's ability to observe the "works" of the Law. This means Israel's unfaithfulness does NOT change the fact that they were chosen. Jacob was chosen and Esau rejected not because of what God knew they would do in the future.

1 Kings 19:10, 14 -

- Elijah pleaded with God against Israel and claimed he was the only one left faithful.
- There were 7,000 left. The point of the 7,000 was not that there were still 7,000 faithful men, but that God's plan was going to move forward through this remnant and leave the rest of the unfaithful in the wake of his judgment.

So, here, Paul introduces the concept of the "remnant" that will receive the blessing and fulfillment of the "chosen" people.

Within the whole of the "foreknown" and "chosen" people of Israel there was always a remnant that believed and remained faithful.

### **11:3-4**

In the days of apostasy Israel still had a remnant then.

The same is true in Paul's day. Israel will never be left without a remnant for the future.

Throughout the OT and into Paul's day there was always a remnant of the chosen people who believed and received the blessing. This will be true of Israel in the future, also.

### **11:5**

"outos oun kai en to nun kairo"

"thus therefore also in the present time"

- Notice Paul's use of THREE connectives in a sequence to begin this statement: "Thus therefore also". Any one single connective would have worked: "Thus", or "Therefore" or "Also". But Paul used three in a row.

- The use of THREE connectives is to point out that what proceeded is much more than a good point of argumentation, but is to secure the fact that God has used the “chosen by grace” and their “remnant” to fulfill his purpose many times in the past, and God is currently in the process of doing it again in a greater eschatological way in Paul’s ministry.
- God’s use of the remnant of the chosen is not a surprise to God or an adjustment to his plan, but it is actually how God foreknew his plan was going to be accomplished.
- Elijah’s ministry experience was similar to Paul’s ministry experience. One exception is that Paul understands what is going on in the historical plan of salvation. Elijah was confused and became depressed/hopeless, and, was rightfully rebuked by the Lord.

Ε ν τ ω ν ο ν κ α λ ρ ω  
 “In the present time”

Five times “ ν ο ν κ α λ ρ ω ” occur together in Paul’s writing:

- Romans 3:26 – “He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”
- Romans 8:18 - “sufferings of the now time”
- 2 Corinthians 6:2 – “I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor”

“Remnant chosen by grace” - This is in contrast to “works of the Law”. They are still God’s chosen people, or covenant people.

- There is a remnant in existence in Paul’s day because of the same principle they began with in Abraham’s day.
- “Remnant” is “*leimma*” in the Greek is a word that is only used here in the NT and once in the LXX in 2 Kings 19:4 referring to the “remnant” that is left in Judah (Jerusalem) after the Assyrian invasion had destroyed and deported the northern ten tribes.

God’s grace chose them, it was NOT their works that made them God’s people. God’s grace and the people’s faith are the source of the remnant.

Micah 5:7-8, “Then the **remnant of Jacob** shall be in the midst of many peoples like dew from the LORD, like showers on the grass, which delay not for a man nor wait for the children of man. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the forest, like a young lion among the flocks of sheep, which, when it goes through, treads down and tears in pieces, and there is none to deliver.”

Zechariah 8:12 referring to the exiles who had returned from Babylon, “But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, declares the LORD of hosts. For there shall be a sowing of peace. The vine shall give its fruit, and the ground shall give its produce, and the heavens shall give their dew. And I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

## 11:6

Grace introduced in Romans 1:5 and 3:24 (12x in 3:24-6:15)

The remnant Jews became Christians in Paul's day. Those without faith were left behind.

"Works" refers to the "works of the Law". The context does not support the concept of "good works", but is still a reference to the legalistic "works" of the Jews in demonstrating their "chosen-ness" and "election" by keeping the Law of Moses.

Faith in Jesus Christ was a return to the grace of being God's chosen people. The faith of Abraham. Rejection of Jesus Christ was a continuation of rebellion to God's election by replacing it with self-centered religious "works of the Law".

Paul uses the word "grace" ("charis") 4x in 11:5-6.

If works is even an option then there is no reason to use the word "grace" since the definition of "grace" would have to change. "Grace" would no longer mean "grace."

## 11:7

This verse is a restating Romans 9:31 by rephrasing the thought.

9:31- "dioko" is replaced in 11:7 with "epizateo"

9:31- "phthano" is replaced in 11:7 with "epitugchano"

"But the elect attained it" of 11:7 restates 9:30

Before in 9:30-32 hardened Israel was contrasted with the believing Gentiles. Here hardened Israel is contrasted with remnant Israel.

What is sought and not obtained is NOT election itself (which refers to the initial acceptance by God). What is sought and NOT obtained here is the benefits of a sustained covenant relationship.

Israel sought it, but only the elect of Israel got it.

Hardening is caused by people who reject God: Pharaoh, Romans 1, 2.

- The word for "hardened" is "*poroo*" which comes from the word "*poros*" which is a kind of marble. The basic meaning is "petrify", "make hard", "render insensitive". It was used in medicine as "causing a stone to form in the bladder or a callus on the hand." ● Used as a metaphor in the NT in:
  - Mark 6:52- "And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened."
  - Mark 8:17- "And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?"
  - John 12:40 (Isaiah 6:10)- "Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.”

Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him. Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue.”

- 2 Corinthians 3:14- “But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ***But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.***”
- The word “blindness” can be used to communicate this same concept of spiritual insensitivity as this word “hardness” does in English.
- “Hardness” or spiritual blindness is sent by God as a judicial act of God who is responding to a person’s (or, a people’s) rejection of the Word of God (or, Truth). God does not randomly harden people’s hearts. It is not a matter of fate that a person becomes insensitive to God’s Word. The person’s lack of response, or faith, places them in a position to harden their heart on any future encounter with God, the Word of God or the Truth of God’s Reality.
  - Romans 1:21-25 - “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. **They exchanged the truth about God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator
  - Romans 9:16-17 - “It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For Scripture says to Pharaoh: ‘I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’ ”

## 11:8

From Deut. 29:4 and Isaiah 29:10

Similar to Isaiah 6:9-10 - “Hear and hear, but do not understand; see and see, but do not perceive.” These verses and this concept is used in all four Gospels and Acts:

- Matthew 13:14-15 -
- Mark 4:12 -
- Luke 8:10 - ● John 12:40 -
- Acts 28:26-27 -

The word “stupor” is “katanyxis” (from LXX translation of Isaiah 29:10) literally means “pricking” and “stinging”. Thus, the word began to refer to numbness which results from a thorn pricking or an insect stinging.

## **11:9, 10**

Psalm 69:22, 23

Originally referred to David's enemies and applied to Jesus' enemies (John 2:17; John 15:25; Matthew 27:34; Acts 1:20).

Paul is sees it here as applied to those who reject God and are hardened.

"their table" would be the temple furniture and ritual.

The sacrificial system revealed Jesus but for them it was a reason to reject Christ and stumble.

The table of showbread and meals that were regularly part of the sacrificial system.

The Jews who trusted in the Levitical system rather than in the Christ it revealed would be stumbling over the table and the meals just like they stumbled over the stone. The Jews with hard hearts were more concerned with maintaining religious purity than on believing the promise revealed in the rituals they practiced.

"backs bent" could refer to slavery, a heavy burden, shrinking back in fear, slumped in grief, weakness, groping in blindness. In any case the condition is opposite freedom found in Christ.

## **11:11-31**

There are now two groups of Jews

- a) believing Jews and members of the church
- b) non-believing Jews who as a result of rejecting Christ have been hardened.

This next section focuses on the non-believing Jews.

Yet Paul is talking to Gentiles (11:13) The hardening of Israel is not permanent.

There is a two-fold process:

1. Israel rejects Christ and so refuses to go to the Gentiles with the good news. This results in the good news being brought directly to the Gentiles while by-passing the Jews.
2. Next, Israel will respond to Christ. The results are the end time resurrection.

## **Five sections here:**

1. **11-12**
  - a. trespass of Israel
  - b. salvation for the Gentiles
  - c. better things when Israel responds
2. **15**
  - a. Israel's rejection
  - b. Reconciliation of the world
  - c. Israel's acceptance be life from the dead
3. **17-23**
  - a. natural branches broken off
  - b. wild branches grafted in
  - c. natural branches grafted back in

**4. 25-26**

- a. Hardening of Israel
- b. Fullness of Gentiles
- c. all Israel will be saved

**5. 30-31**

- a. Disobedience of Israel
- b. Mercy for Gentiles
- c. Mercy to Israel

**11:11**

Paul is still talking about bodies of people (Jews, Gentiles) and not individuals within those groups.

The model of these verses follows this pattern:

- 1. Rhetorical question
- 2. Emphatic denial
- 3. Explanation

The opening rhetorical question is a parallel of the opening question in 11:1.

Two interesting words are used:

- 1. "Stumble" - it is worth considering that Paul's use of "stumble" is being used of a momentary spiritual failure and recovery from the stumble is not only possible, but recovery is likely.
- 2. "Fall" - would then seem to be referring to a permanent condition of falling into spiritual darkness with no hope of recovery.
  - a. "Fall" is the Greek word "*pipto*". It is used to refer to physical falling in the NT, but is used to refer to an eternal spiritual collapse 3x in Paul's other uses of the word "*pipto*" and also in Hebrews and Isaiah in the LXX:
    - i. Romans 11:22 - "Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off." ii. Romans 14:4 - "Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls."
    - iii. 1 Corinthians 10:12 - "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."
    - iv. Hebrews 4:11 - "Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience."
    - v. Isaiah 24:20 - "The earth staggers like a drunkard, it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls ("*pipto*") and will not rise again."

The process is three steps:

- 1. Israel's Trespass - Israel's rejection of Jesus (sin) - the believing Jews are rejected by the Jewish nation

2. Israel's Diminution (meaning reduction in size or importance) - Gentiles - the believing Jews turn to the Gentile nations with the message of salvation
3. Israel's Fullness - Jews realize their mistake and turn to the Jesus for salvation. At some point the Jews see the Gentiles benefiting from their relationship with Jesus the Messiah and the Jews recover from their stumble.

#### **11:12**

"trespass" is "

"Diminishing" or "" is "hettema" in the Greek which means "defeat" and "loss". This word is used in contrast with the word "pleroma" translated "full number", "completeness", or "full inclusion".

So, the first word seems to indicate "defeat", but Israel's restoration is described as a "completeness", "full number." The contrast is between "defeat" and "completeness". It does not necessary mean a specific full number or "all" Israel reaches faith in the end, but Israel's purpose is brought to completion after the purpose of their defeat is complete.

Israel's "fullness" means even more blessings which is detailed in 11:15 as the Resurrection from the dead. "fullness" or "full inclusion" is "*pleroma*" and should be understood to mean the same thing as "full number" ("*pleroma*") of Gentiles in 11:25. Which means after the time of conversion of the Gentiles (or, Church Age) there will be a large, worldwide conversion of Israel. This will be referred to as the salvation of "all Israel" in 11:26.

#### **11:13**

Because Paul's ministry is to the Gentiles (and, not to the Jews specifically) Paul sees himself as ministering to the Jews by moving God's plan along towards the final phase by ministering the Gospel to the Gentiles in this second phase. So, Paul's ministry to the Gentiles today is the best way for him to minister to the Jews, though it be indirectly.

"Speaking to you Gentiles" - Paul now makes a point to address the Gentile church concerning their correct understanding of the times, seasons, plans and purposes of God concerning Israel. Paul's point is NOT that he has given up on Israel in the comprehensive plan of God, but he has recognized the season in which he lives. It is the season to go to the Gentiles. And, in this season the Jews, as a nation, will NOT listen to the Gospel. But, this season (Church Age) will someday be fulfilled and then God's direction of ministry will change.

It is possible that in the Roman church there was a doctrinal or situational reason for Paul to admonish them concerning Israel's present condition and future purpose. There was NO place to remove natural Israel from God's purpose even though the Gospel had been given to the Gentiles and the Church was no God's people.

#### **11:14**

#### **11:15**

"rejection" refers to "a throwing away" salvation through Jesus or "a loss" of salvation available through Jesus. The Jews did the throwing away. The Jews rejected Jesus, so God rejected the Jews and gave them blind eyes.



“acceptance” is the direct opposite of “rejection”. This appears to be God’s acceptance of the Jews. Which would mean it is God’s “rejection” of the Jews earlier in the verse that is reversed because of the Jew acceptance of Jesus by faith.

Israel’s conversion (acceptance) will be initiate the events of the resurrection.

F.F. Bruce says, “The meaning may be that Israel’s conversion will be the immediate precursor of the resurrection, to coincide with the parousia of Christ.”

### **11:16**

Paul uses two illustrations to show that what God began will be accomplished and accepted.

1. Firstfruits, or batch of dough - see Numbers 15:17-21 where Israelites offered the Lord a cake made from the first ground grain coming off that year’s threshing-floor. Thus, if the first batch of dough is accepted and holy, then the rest of the year’s harvest of grain will be acceptable.
  - a. A similar practice was the waving of the first-fruits from the field when 1 Corinthians 15:23 says that Jesus Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection
  - b. The “first fruits” that Paul is referring to here would likely be the first Jewish believers who accepted Jesus as the Christ and Savior. This would include Peter, Paul and others in that first generation of Jews.
  - c. The first fruit offering is the believing remnant of Paul’s day (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Thes. 2:13)
2. Root of a fig tree and its branches. Since the root of the fig tree is flowing with the life, nutrition or sap of God’s truth, plan and purpose, then the branches that are growing from it and producing fruit are acceptable and holy.

### **11:17**

Olive trees were the most cultivated tree in the Mediterranean world The wild olive tree was by nature very unproductive.

NOTE on Fig Trees and Cultivation: Even in the 1900’s it was a cultivation practice to graft a shoot, or branch, of a wild olive tree into a cultivated olive tree which was ceasing to bear fruit. The sap of the old cultivated tree empowers the wild branch to bear fruit. The Roman writer Columella, a contemporary of Paul’s, writes that an olive tree that was producing poorly could be reinvigorated by grafting in a slip of a wild olive tree. Cutting away the old cultivated branches would allow air and light to reach the tree. The grafting affects both the old stock of the tree which is itself reinvigorated by the new graft. The wild olive branch that is grafted in begins to bear fruit and oil because of the sap coming from the old stock of the cultivated olive tree.

The tree represents the kingdom of God.

In Paul’s illustration the cultivated olive tree that is to produce the fruit of God’s kingdom was Israel.

But, the cultivated tree of Israel failed to produce fruit and oil. So, the old branches were cut away and fresh branches from the wild olive tree was grafted in.

The old branches of the cultivated olive tree that were cut away represents the unbelieving Jews who had rejected Jesus.

The grafted in branches of the wild olive tree represents the Gentiles who had accepted the message and placed faith in Jesus. Their election is sure, their purpose will be fulfilled and God's promises will be completed. Through Christ the Gentiles have become part of that election, calling and fulfilling.

Jewish branches were broken off because of their unbelief in the promises of God.

Likewise, Gentiles who enter the church system (similar to the Jews entering the system of rituals of the Mosaic Law) without faith in Jesus will be cut away.

Do not be arrogant because you are involved with a church system. If you are in unbelief (meaning never saved; never having placed faith in the promise of Jesus) then you will be cut away just like the unbelieving Jews were cut away for their unbelief even though they regularly kept and obeyed the Law of Moses. They never understood it, so they never could believe it.

### **11:20**

Jewish believers became proud of their place in God's plan, but were unproductive. Gentiles also need to fear both their arrogance and their lack of productivity.

"Through faith" is emphatic in the Greek. This means it is the focus of this sentence.

### **11:21**

"Provided you continue" - continuance in the faith is the best test of reality. Failure to continue or slipping into false doctrine or turning to other religions or returning to the ways of the world or continuing in the ways of the flesh are NOT a continuation in the faith.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 Paul tells the Corinthians to examine themselves to see whether they are holding to the faith.

A person who has been born again will move towards God and grow closer to the image of Jesus Christ.

But, a person who has never been born again will fail in the long run because they cannot continue the facade.

## **Romans 11:25-32**

Paul is going to review salvation history concerning Israel one more time in 11:25-32.

Paul explains the mystery of God's purpose for Israel. This information had been previously concealed and not fully understood, but Paul now makes it known.

### **11:25**

This verse begins with "for" which ties it into the verses before it concerning the olive tree.

"Mystery" is "**mysterion**" and does not mean the unknown.

It refers to God's activity in history concerning man's salvation that **has** been revealed to man.

The use of mystery refers to things that had been hidden in the past.

It is a technical term used in Jewish apocalyptic verses where God reveals his set purpose to mankind through a prophet.

Daniel 2:17-18, 27-30, 47

Matthew 13:11 (Mark 4:11, Luke 8:10)

Romans 16:25

1 Corinthians 2:1, 7

1 Corinthians 4:1

1 Corinthians 15:51

Ephesians 1:9

Ephesians 3:3, 4, 9

Ephesians 6:19

Colossians 1:26, 27

Colossians 2:2

Colossians 4:3

1 Timothy 3:9, 16

Revelation 1:20

Revelation 10:7

Revelation 17:5, 7

The mystery concerning Israel is immediately stated by Paul:

- a) Israel is the chosen nations
- b) Israel has experienced a hardening in part until Gentiles have come in
- c) Israel will be saved.

“Conceited” lines up with 11:17-21

The hardening is:

- a) partial
- b) temporal
- c) And a response to Israel having rejected Jesus in Mt. 12 and other places.

This hardening will serve as discipline and eventually bring Israel to God.

In the OT the Gentiles were in darkness and the Jews had God’s revelation.

In the NT the Jews are in darkness and the Gentiles walk in the light.

In the End the Jews will need to turn to God out of darkness just like the Gentiles have in the church age.

“Full number” means also “Complete Number”

### **11:26**

Israel’s restoration promised:

Deuteronomy 30:1-5

Jeremiah 23:3  
Ezekiel 11:17  
Ezekiel 36:24  
Micah 2:12  
Zechariah 10:8-10

“And So” is “houtos” or “in this way”

This can mean:

- a) this is the result, “all Israel will be saved
- b) this is how it happens, or, to explain the manner of how all Israel will be saved just as the prophets said or just as Paul has explained.

“All Israel” “pas Israel”

Israel can mean:

- a) the community of believers both Jew and Gentile
- b) the nation of Israel
- c) the believers within Israel

In 9-11 Israel has always meant the nation of Israel.

Notice 9:6, “not all who are from Israel are Israel” Paul writes “all Israel” not “every Israelite”

“Salvation” is “sothesetai”

### **11:27**

The quote from Isaiah 59:20, 21 and 27:9 shows to Paul’s readers that even the OT predicted these things: a)

God will send a deliverer

- b) Israel will be godless
- c) God will take away their sins
- d) God has a covenant with Israel

### **11:28**

### **11:29**

### **11:30**

### **11:31**

